



I am going to focus this month's article entirely on Hurricane Florence. This was a historic storm of record, and discussing anything else does not seem appropriate at this time.

I would like to start off by telling all of the citizens of Pine Knoll Shores that, in my observation, we should all be proud of our community. And by *community* I mean the total collection of men and women who live,

own property, and work in our town. A friend remarked that from his view in California he compared the response he saw in North Carolina to Florence to what he observed in New Orleans 13 years ago. He was amazed at the collective effort of many in North Carolina to help one another. I think Pine Knoll Shores was a microcosm of this. Here are a few of the things I saw with my own eyes:

- I saw 24 Pine Knoll Shores employees sleeping on air mattresses for a week at town hall and at the public safety building, all spending 14-plus hours a day clearing streets, setting up and moving pumps, and communicating with our property owners literally worldwide via social media. Four of these people saw their homes either destroyed or significantly damaged. They knew of this, yet they remained.
- I saw citizens who immediately grabbed chainsaws and went to the homes of neighbors to offer immediate assistance to people who, in some cases, had trouble getting off their property due to fallen trees. Many of these citizens did this before they started any work on their own homes.
- I saw citizens prepare food for town employees, for electric linemen from throughout the Southeastern US, and for just about anyone who needed a break. This food was provided in a mobile kitchen that I saw all over town in the two weeks following the storm.
- I saw a citizen who owns a Bobcat mini-excavator offer his help to anyone in town who needed it.
- When the debris started to be collected on September 21, and we had a shortage of volunteers to monitor the trucks, we scheduled a short-notice meeting at town hall to solicit volunteers. The board room was crowded with many faces I had never seen before. These folks simply wanted to contribute.
- I saw a citizen who runs a foundation present a check for a generous sum to the Public Safety Department for immediate post-storm support.
- I saw patience, a rare quality not often seen in today's world, demonstrated across the board in everything from waiting for a truck to move to waiting for a pump to start.

In short, I saw on display the type of people who make the town what it is. While certainly not surprised at what I witnessed, I must say that it was good to see the degree to which Pine Knoll Shores citizens put the welfare of others before their own. That is walking the walk.

A retrospective on the storm:

Pre-storm. In 2013, following lessons learned from Hurricane Irene (2011), Emergency Manager and Fire Chief Jason Baker essentially rewrote the Pine Knoll Shores Emergency Operations Plan (EOP). I think he did a great job with the EOP, as it is action-oriented based on a timeline relative to landfall. Some of the things that the department heads accomplished before landfall of Florence:

- We met to review the EOP itself, with particular emphasis on the checklist-type items listed on one appendix.
- We refueled our diesel and gas tanks at town hall. Years ago some smart people in Pine Knoll Shores said we should have our own fuel resupply capability for use during emergencies, and they installed these tanks. We do, and it paid off in Florence.
- We op-checked all generators at town hall, the public safety building (PSB), and all of Sonny Cunningham's production wells.
- The mayor declared a State of Emergency.
- Chief Baker's Emergency Operations Center was stood up.
- Sonny Cunningham filled up our two massive water tanks.

- We purchased food and water supplies for all town personnel who would stay on the island.
- The mayor, Chief Baker, and I attended meetings in Morehead City with the county and other towns to discuss curfews, evacuations, declarations, and other things to ready us for the disaster.
- Assistant Town Manager/Finance Officer Julie Anderson started probably the best public messaging campaign for a natural disaster that a town of our size could ask for. I received a number of comments from homeowners from afar who told me that the single best way to keep up-to-date on the impacts of the storm in Carteret County was via the town's Facebook page.
- The damage assessment teams (made up of citizen volunteers with contracting experience) were contacted and lined up for when they were needed.
- Construction sites in town were secured.
- Pumping down of the Reefstone/Bermuda Green pond and the golf course ponds started in an effort to create excess capacity.
- Chief Baker arranged for an agreement with NCDOT to allow the town to clear debris on Highway 58 (a state road). For those new to hurricanes in our area: during Ophelia (2005) and Irene (2011) the debris that accumulated on Highway 58 was not collected until just before Christmas. Try to imagine what you have seen sitting on the road in the last month still there, with another two months to go until pickup.
- Chief Baker made contact with our debris collectors to arrange for the start of work before a single drop of rainfall. Again for those new to hurricanes here: each year the chief solicits bids from contractors for this work, selects a contractor, and gets Board approval. This is done annually in the April-May time frame, and satisfies FEMA guidelines for federal assistance for the cleanup. Some of our neighboring communities were putting this out to bid after the storm.

During the storm. What made Florence unique (and horribly destructive) was the fact that it was 250 miles wide and moved at 3 mph. We experienced wind and rain unseen in the memory of anyone I spoke to, and it lasted for three solid days.

Here are a few of the things that occurred during September 14-16:

- There were 10 people (and dogs) living at town hall. The spouse of Julie Anderson was here, and worked as a volunteer helping out Sonny Cunningham with the pumping battle.
- There were 14 people (and dogs) living at the PSB.
- Pumping continued.
- The Fire and Police departments were out almost as soon as winds allowed for safe movement. Long before the town was reopened to reentry pass holders and the curfew ended, fallen trees were being cut to create passage. For those who thought driving was dangerous when you first ventured out, it was actually considerably worse immediately after the storm. This work was particularly difficult as the firemen and police officers kept being chased inside by dangerous winds.
- The town lost water pressure due to the unexplained loss of power from a production well. A boil-water advisory was issued when water service was restored.
- The police were enforcing the curfew established by Mayor Jones.
- The public-messaging campaign continued with emails and Facebook posts. This included videos of drone flights, beach rides, and rides throughout town.

Immediately post-storm. This is, of course, when the reality of what Florence did to Pine Knoll Shores became clear. Many who evacuated told me upon their return that they had never seen such devastation to our beautiful community. This period is when we saw what our town is really made of. Here are a few of the things which took place from September 17 to a date yet to be determined (as I type this on October 17, we are still picking up debris).

- Pumping continued, and continued, and continued. The recurring comment I heard was, "I have never seen water collect here." There is simply no way to adequately describe the shock to the island and Carteret County that this storm and its 25 to 30 inches of wind-driven rain presented. Our water table

(Continued on page 17)